



Jim Newberry, Mayor

LEXINGTON - FAYETTE URBAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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Mayor plans college scholarship program to ignite economic development

Mayor Jim Newberry, surrounded by several of the state's most prominent and powerful educators, education advocates and representatives of the private sector, today announced that he will ask the Urban County Council to approve a pilot college scholarship program designed to ignite economic development in Fayette County – believed to be the first of its kind, nationwide.

“As you can see from our news conference today, there is unprecedented support for this scholarship proposal,” Newberry said. “It represents a giant step forward for our community, its future and its young people.”

Newberry was joined at the news conference by Fayette County Schools Superintendent Stu Silberman, Executive Director of the Prichard Committee Robert Sexton, Commerce Lexington President & CEO Robert Quick, UK President Lee Todd, Transylvania University President Charles Shearer, Bluegrass Community and Technical College President & CEO Augusta A. Julian, and Interim President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Brad Cowgill.

Through the “Lexington First Fund,” Newberry plans to offer four-year scholarships to graduates of Fayette County high schools – public or private – who plan to major in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, so-called STEM majors. Lexington is believed to be the first city in the nation to offer tuition scholarships to high school graduates who choose to major in a STEM discipline. Other communities, such as Kalamazoo, Michigan have implemented privately funded scholarships for all high school graduates, but the requirement to major in a certain area has not been part of the program. In Kalamazoo, even though the program is in its infancy, it has already led to an increase in certain economic indicators.

“In the global economy, education is economic development,” Newberry said. “Lexington must make investments in its children now to reap the economic benefits in the long run. Unless we improve our knowledge base in the critical STEM areas, our city will not be able to attract high-paying jobs.”

Newberry said it is both the worst of times and the best of times to begin a scholarship program. “It is the worst of times because our economy has slowed, money is very tight and we have to make cuts to balance the city budget,” Newberry said. “It is the best of times because our economy has slowed, money is tight, and we have to make cuts to balance the city budget. That clearly illustrates that there is a pressing need to grow the tax base with high-paying jobs. To do that in a way that makes real progress we must invest in our youth in a way that benefits the entire community.” In addition to public funding, Newberry said he will seek private donations to the fund.

Under the pilot program:

- ☐ Every Fayette County high school graduate (public or private) would be eligible for up to a four-year tuition scholarship at an institution of higher learning located in roughly an hour's drive of Lexington.
- ☐ Recipients must pursue an associate or bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering, or math as defined by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, or a bachelor's degree in education in order to teach one of these subjects.
- ☐ Recipients must be full-time students and maintain good academic standing, as defined by the postsecondary institution where the recipient is in attendance.
- ☐ Scholarships would be in an amount equal to the lesser of the actual cost of tuition, or the average tuition for in-state students at Kentucky's four-year public institutions, or for such lesser amount as the Urban County Council may determine.
- ☐ Scholarship amounts will be based on the period of time the recipient has attended educational institutions in Fayette County prior to graduation from high school. A recipient who attended school in Fayette County from kindergarten through 12th grade would receive 100 percent funding, four years of high school in Fayette County would receive 40 percent funding and fewer than four years would receive a pro-rata award based on 10 percent per high school year completed in Fayette County.
- ☐ The scholarship will be administered by an experienced, independent firm.
- ☐ All recipients shall seek available financial aid and any financial aid for which the recipient is eligible will reduce the recipient's scholarship amount. The projected family contribution will also be taken into account and reduced from the scholarship amount.

As a pilot project, the Lexington First Fund will be evaluated at the end of the first year to determine if modifications are needed to make the program more successful, Newberry said.